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ABSTRACT

Guidelines to assist administrators in establishing a small secondary school or revising an existing one were presented in this report. The study population was chosen from the Western Regional area and a pilot study was conducted with Arizona State University graduate students. Fifty-two guidelines were established in the areas of curriculum and scheduling; instructor performance and methods; organization and involvement of community, State Department of Education, and elementary school personnel in the routine operation of the secondary school; employment of professional and lay staff; acquisition of school plant facilities and equipment; inservice training; and secondary school finance. Six major recommendations were presented after data analysis. It was noted that by following the guidelines, small isolated communities will be better able to enroll and successfully educate secondary students in their own individualized schools. (PS)

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GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING OR REORGANIZING A VERY SMALL, INDIVIDUALIZED SECONDARY SCHOOL

A Summary of a Doctoral Dissertation by Rowland R. King

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FOREWORD

This report, one of the series selected from educationally significant studies conducted through the universities in Arizona and destined for distribution to administrators at the local district level, is a joint effort of the Bureau of Educational Research and Services of Arizona State University and the Publications Committee of the Superintendent's Division of the Arizona School Administrators. The purpose of these reports is to provide administrators with current information which may prove meaningful and useful to the administrators in meeting the responsibilities with which they deal.

The present study was a developmental research investigation conducted by Dr. Rowland King, presently the Director of the Arizona Educational Information System. The investigation concerned itself with the generation of guidelines for reorganization of a very small individualized secondary school in an isolated community.

GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING OR REORGANIZING A VERY SMALL, INDIVIDUALIZED SECONDARY SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

One has heard the cry frequently of the inner city and the unequal educational opportunities offered our minority group citizens. NBC news on November 2, 1971 reported that an extensive federal study had shown that "equal educationl opportunities in this country are a myth." No one knows this better than the educational administrators in rural America. The rationale for leaving rural educational problems to rural America to solve because not many people are involved is a misconception when one is faced with statistics that bear out the fact that approximately 15 million children 18 years and under were educated in rural schools in 1966.

Small secondary schools for years were patterned after their big city counterparts, making use of conventional classrooms and very formalized scheduling. Small school design, however, can no more be patterned on large school design than the automobile can be patterned on train design. But small schools can be designed to serve educational needs just as the automobile serves the needs of transportation of small groups far better than a branch-line train.

This study concentrated on one of the most critical aspects of the rural educational scene, that of the very small isolated secondary school. By definition, a school of this type was determined to have a grade seven through twelve enrollment of sixty students or less. This type of school was isolated to the extent of being at least forty miles from the nearest community with a secondary school.

THE PROBLEM

There have been numerous studies on individual innovations in small schools in a variety of areas, however, these have never been fully pooled so that an administrator could establish a successful small secondary school or revise an existing one by utilizing and following certain concepts. To give the administrator such guidelines was the purpose of this study. By the word "successful" a concept of an adequate educational program for each individual student plus an adequate cost factor for this program was meant. This was in comparison with statewide educational programs and fiscal funding.

A second consideration was that vital populations necessary to insure the successful establishment of such a school had not been consulted, not were their attitudes and desires analyzed.

An isolated community was a third facet of the problem due to the fact that the more isolated a community was from larger communities the larger the problem most schools had in providing a varied program of studies for their students.

Four general hypotheses were developed and are presented and answered later in this report.

PROCEDURE

The area chosen for selection of the study population was that represented by the Western States Small School Project and by the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools, as well as California which completed the Western Regional area. The actual states involved were as follows: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington.

A pilot study was conducted with Arizona State University graduate students that represented the background of the populations. Since the instrument was original, and not standardized, the pilot study was necessary to establish test reliability and validity. Once this was established, with the poor items being removed from the instrument, the instrument was mailed out to the four populations in the chosen states. The four populations involved were: (1) Western States Small School Administrators; (2) Postmasters in isolated communities; (3) House of Representatives or Assembly legislators from rural districts; (4) The state directors of secondary, rural, and Indian education for each of the states involved.

By review of the literature, fifty-five research principles were established under seven areas that were considered essential in establishing or reorganizing a small, individualized secondary school. These seven areas were:

1. Curriculum and scheduling
2. Instructor performance and methods.
3. Organization and active involvement of community.
4. Employment of the professional and lay staff.
5. Obtaining suitable school plant facilities and equipment.
6. In-service training.
7. Financing the secondary school.

The seven areas and fifty-five principles were incorporated into an attitudinal instrument and mailed to members of the previously mentioned four vital populations.

Data from the instrument were statistically analyzed by use of the Two-Way ANOVA with Repeated Measures Test with a significance level of .05. If the Two-Way ANOVA Test proved significant at that level, then a Scheffe's Multiple Comparison Test was utilized to pinpoint the exact differences to a population group and a question. The results were that no population groups were singled out, but 12 out of 63 questions were significantly different from the questions within their own areas.

A Guideline Synthesis Process was placed into operation, which compared the results from the statistical analysis with the researcher's principles and compromised the two if necessary. Fifty-two guidelines were created under the seven areas. A Pert Summary Network and a Chronological Check List for the administrator and/or community were created.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings

The findings as they pertained to the previously stated four hypotheses are as follows:

Hypotheses 1. The answer to the first hypothesis, that practical guidelines can be formulated that will provide secondary-aged students with an adequate and successful very small, individualized-secondary school in terms of an education program and fiscal expenditures, which was accepted was not to be a one statement response, but a series of objective responses that are as follows:

1. A set of fifty-two guidelines within seven areas essential to the establishment or reorganization of a secondary school of this type have been developed. These are practical in nature and state specific tasks to be performed.

2. The guidelines were developed by a synthesis process to increase their validity.

3. The guidelines were constructed with the view point that an individual student within the small secondary school should be afforded the same quality education as that of a student in a larger school. The cost factor should be reasonable and every innovative technique should be utilized to make it so.

Hypothesis 2. Through utilization of the Scheffe Multiple Comparison Test, the hypothesis, that significant differences will exist between what researchers consider successful practices for a small high school and what the four vital populations consider them to be, was proved to be true in relation to the individual question items within the area in 12 out of 63 question items.

Hypothesis 3. That significant differences exist between the four vital populations in the areas of what they feel is necessary for a very small, individualized secondary school, was rejected after the post hoc test revealed no one group or groups could be distinguished.

Hypothesis 4. Personal interviews conducted by the investigator and foundations provided by the literature assumed this statement, that isolated small communities desire to have a secondary school of their own established in their community, to be acceptable. People generally wished to have their children at home in their own community, but were willing to sacrifice this when the quality of the educational program and/or financial load became too great.

Conclusions

The culmination point of this investigation was the development of the 52 guidelines for establishing or reorganizing a secondary school as described in this report. After having gone through the guideline synthesis process, it was concluded that each guideline could be placed under one of the following major areas:

Area 1: Curriculum and Scheduling.

Area 2: Instructor Performance and Methods.

Area 3: Organization and Active Involvement of Community, State Department of Education, and Elementary School Personnel in the Routine Operation of the Secondary School.

Area 4: Employment of the Professional and Lay Staff.

Area 5: Obtaining Suitable School Plant Facilities and Equipment.

Area 6: In-Service Training.

Area 7: Financing the Secondary School.

Administrators desiring the 52 guidelines may obtain them by written request to the Bureau of Educational Research and Services, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85281.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Six major recommendations were presented by the investigator after analysis of the data. These concerned themselves with the application and future research connected with the study. They are:

1. That an isolated community adopt these guidelines as written, and establish a very small, individualized secondary school of its own.

2. That a community with a small rural secondary school reorganize its school on the basis of these guidelines.

3. That these guidelines be used to improve rural education at the secondary level throughout the United States.

4. That by following these guidelines an administrator will greatly enhance his chances of being able to have a successful secondary school in terms of an educational program at a reasonable cost.

5. That when a school district and community agree to try these guidelines, they contact a department of educational administration at any university in order to have a research investigator conduct an evaluation study from the start to the finish of the project.

6. That copies of an abstract of this investigation be circulated throughout rural America, its school districts, and its isolated communities. That copies also be circulated throughout state departments of education in the various states.

IMPLICATIONS

Our society has required that its citizens reach certain levels of proficiency just to be able to live a so-called average life. Although the elementary school has been able to bring many students up to an acceptable proficiency level in basic skills, the secondary school cannot ignore the obligation especially if the school runs from the seventh year through the twelfth. Large agreement exists that the basic proficiencies which every citizen must possess are mathematics, science, reading ability, and language development (speaking, writing, and listening ability). With basic skill levels obtained in each of these a citizen may branch out into almost any other area and be able to progress in a satisfactory manner.

For the small, isolated community faced with the multitude of dubious ramifications inherent therein, or developing a successful secondary school of their own, this study has much to offer in the way of practical suggestion. By following the 52 guidelines categorized into the seven major areas described, this type of community will be better enabled to enroll and successfully educate the secondary aged students in their own small, individualized school.

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